

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6760

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 0309

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, JM

SUBJECT: JLP HEADQUARTERS RANSACKED BY THUGS

1. NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS OF THE OPPOSITION JLP WAS ATTACKED JANUARY 20 BY A GANG OF 60 MOTORCYCLE-BORNE THUGS, WHO SMASHED FURNITURE AND OFFICE EQUIPMENT, STABBED A WATCHMAN AND RESEARCH OFFICER, AND ATTEMPTED TO SET THE BUILDING AFIRE BY BURNING VOTERS LISTS AND OTHER DOCUMENTS. THE GANG COMPLETED ITS 15-MINUTE RAMPAGE AND FLED BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF THE POLICE.
 2. THE ATTACK WAS THE THIRD DIRECTED AGAINST THE JLP IN LESS THAN 24 HOURS. EARLIER IN THE DAY THE HOME OF A JLP OFFICIAL IN SOUTH ST. ANDREW WAS DEMOLISHED AND ITS OCCUPANTS BEATEN. ON JANUARY 29 AN OPEN AIR MEETING OF 800 JLP SUPPORTERS IN SOUTH WEST ST. ANDREW CONSTITUENCY WAS ATTACKED BY A MOTORCYCLE GANG. A ROCK AND BOTTLE THROWING MELEE ENSUED. ONE JLP MAN WAS SHOT AND SEVERAL PERSONS INJURED. POLICE RESTORED ORDER BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF OPPOSITION LEADER EDWARD SEAGA AND THE MEETING THEN PROCEEDED.
 3. FOLLOWING THE ATTACK ON THE JLP OFFICE SEAGA TOLD THE PRESS THAT HE WAS CALLING AN EMERGENCY MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE PARTY TO DEAL WITH THESE ATTACKS AND ANNOUNCED
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THAT THE JLP WOULD BOYCOTT THE NEXT SITTING OF PARLIAMENT "AS THE

FIRST STEP IN A CAMPAIGN WHICH WE MUST WAGE TO BRING TO THE ATTENTION OF THE COUNTRY THE FACT THAT THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT WISH TO HAVE AN OPPOSITION WHICH CAN CARRY OUT ITS LAWFUL FUNCTIONS." SEAGA SAID HE SAW THE ATTACKS AS PART OF A GOVERNMENT EFFORT TO EVENTUALLY REDUCE THE COUNTRY TO A ONE-PARTY STATE.

4. IN A STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT JAN 21 CALLING FOR AN END TO POLITICAL VIOLENCE PRIME MINISTER MANLEY ADMITTED THAT "FOLLOWING A SERIES OF GRAVE PROVOCATIONS, IT APPEARS THAT A GROUP OF PNP SUPPORTERS RETALIATED AND ATTACKED THE JLP HEADQUARTERS." MANLEY WENT ON TO "WARN EVERYONE REGARDLESS OF PARTY AFFILIATION THAT THE WHOLE STRENGTH OF THE SECURITY FORCES OF JAMAICA WILL BE EMPLOYED IN THE ATTEMPT TO STOP THIS EVIL THING FROM REARING ITS UGLY HEAD IN JAMAICA AGAIN."

5. FOLLOWING THE JLP STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING SEAGA CALLED ON GOVERNMENT TO DECLARE A STATE OF EMERGENCY IN THE JONES TOWN AND TRENCH TOWN AREAS OF LOWER ST. ANDREW. ANYTHING LESS, HE SAID, "...WILL ONLY CONVINCE THE PUBLIC THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS EITHER DELIBERATELY INEFFECTIVE OR A CAPTIVE PAWN OF CERTAIN FORCES WITHIN THE PNP."

6. COMMENT: MANLEY AND THE PNP HAVE COME OUT OF THIS SERIES OF INCIDENTS WITH A BLACK EYE. PUBLIC CONCERN OVER UNRESTRAINED PNP THUGGERY HAS BEEN HIGH FOLLOWING THE ATTACK ON TREVOR MUNROE AND THE SUBSEQUENT LACK OF ARRESTS. THE PRIME MINISTER'S ADMISSION OF THE INVOLVEMENT OF PNP SUPPORTERS IN THE ATTACK ON THE JLP HEADQUARTERS WAS THE MINIMUM REQUIRED TO CHECK THE GROWING CYNICISM OVER THE GAP BETWEEN THE PARTY'S RHETORIC AND ITS ACTIONS. THE PUBLIC WILL BE WATCHING CLOSELY TO SEE IF THERE WILL BE ANY ARRESTS AND WHETHER THEY ARE JUST A FEW SACRIFICIAL LOW LEVEL TYPES OR MORE SENIOR PARTY OFFICIALS.

7. THE JLP OFFICE AND THE HOME OF THE PARTY OFFICIAL ATTACKED JANUARY 20 ARE IN ST. ANDREW SOUTH, THE CONSTITUENCY OF PNP MINISTER OF HOUSING ANTHONY SPAULDING. THE EMBASSY HAS LITTLE DOUBT HE DIRECTED THE ATTACKS. THAT HE CONTROLS A MOTORCYCLE GANG BASED IN THE CONSTITUENCY AND DOES NOT HESITATE TO USE IT FOR POLITICAL ENDS IS WELL KNOWN. HE HAS SO USED THEM IN THE PAST AND WITH IMPUNITY. JCF AND CONFIDENTIAL

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JDF OFFICERS HAVE INTIMATED TO EMBASSY OFFICERS THAT THEIR HANDS ARE TIED WHEN IT COMES TO SPAULDING'S THUGS. WHEN SOME OF THEM WERE PICKED UP IN A GUN COURT SWEEP LAST YEAR HE HAD THEM FREED AND BACK ON THE STREETS IN A MATTER OF HOURS.

8. THE IMMEDIATE CAUSE OF THE VIOLENCE IS THE COUNTRY-

WIDE VOTER ENUMERATION AND REREGISTRATION DRIVE WHICH BEGAN TWO WEEKS AGO. THE JLP IS INTENT ON REGAINING

SPAULDING'S SEAT, WHICH HE WON WITH A MAJORITY OF ONLY 50.47 PERCENT IN 1972, AND HAVE MOUNTED AN INTENSIVE CAMPAIGN TO GET ALL THEIR SUPPORTERS ON THE VOTER'S LIST IN SOUTH ST. ANDREW. BECAUSE OF INTIMIDATION OF JLP SCRUTINEERS BY PNP THUGS, ENUMERATION OF VOTERS IN 23 POLLING DIVISIONS OF THE CONSTITUENCY WAS SUSPENDED BY THE CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER LAST WEEK.

9. LACKING SIGNIFICANT POLICE ACTION AGAINST SPAULDING'S THUGS, WHICH THE EMBASSY CONSIDERS UNLIKELY, THE PROBABILITY OF FURTHER POLITICAL VIOLENCE IS INCREASED. THE JLP HAS ITS OWN "TOUGHS", AND WHILE WE DO NOT EXPECT THEM TO GO ON THE OFFENSIVE, WE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED TO SEE A NUMBER OF "PROTECTIVE REACTION" CLASHES IN THE FUTURE.
GERARD

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